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THE ETHICS OF THE COMPETITIVE PROCESS.

THE result of the argument, as carried on in the preceding chapter,¹ has been to show that no absolute or *a priori* principle can be established regarding the proper sphere of social or political control, but that in every case conditions of fact should govern. It has been alleged by some, however, that, starting purely from such an empiric basis, it can be established as a general principle that the coercive power of the state should be kept within the closest limits possible. It is asserted, in short, that this is the lesson taught by a study of the conditions of life generally in the biological world. In the sub-human world, it is said, continued progress and development have been rendered possible solely by the fact that individuals have been forced to bear the consequences which necessarily came from unrestricted competition with the members of their own and other species. By a like competitive process, it is argued, the improvement of the human race may best be secured. The present chapter will be devoted to a consideration of the validity of this position.

The chief exponent of this theory is Mr. Herbert Spencer. The latest and probably final statement of his views is to be

¹ This article is, in substance, a chapter from a work entitled *Social Justice*, which is to appear in the early fall from the press of The Macmillan Co.

found in his work *Justice*, which constitutes Part IV of his *Principles of Ethics*.¹

As is well known, Mr. Spencer is a defender of the theory that the evolutionary process has been able, not only to develop the feeling of moral obligation, but to bring about its very creation from materials which did not originally contain it even in germ. The illogicalness of such a position would seem sufficiently obvious, but is somewhat explained when we consider the essential character which Mr. Spencer ascribes to the ethical idea:

Most people [he says] regard the subject of ethics as being conduct considered as calling forth approbation or reprobation. But the primary subject-matter of ethics is conduct considered objectively as producing good or bad results to self or others, or both.²

Acting upon such a conception as this, it is, of course, comparatively easy for him to treat human justice as but an outgrowth from animal or sub-human conduct.

Within this lower world of life it is undoubtedly true that development has been an outcome of a competitive régime in which those less fit, as related to their environment, have been destroyed, and those more fit, in the same sense, have survived and been enabled to transmit their favorable characteristics to their offspring, and thus the gradual evolution of higher, more complex, and better integrated species rendered possible. It is also true that this weeding process has been the result of an order

¹ In addition to the support claimed to be derived from the empiric facts of biological evolution, Mr. Spencer, positivist though he be, relies also upon a bald doctrine of abstract natural rights. In that chapter of his *Justice* which is devoted to the establishment of the authority of the individualistic formula which he has obtained, he avowedly rests it upon an *a priori* ground, and calls to his support the dicta of such men as Blackstone and Mackintosh, wherein they have declared the supreme, invariable, and all-controlling power of natural law. Spencer closes with the truly remarkable argument that "paying some respect to these dicta (to which I may add that of the German jurists with their *Naturrecht*) does not imply unreasoning credulity. We may reasonably suspect that, however much they may be in form open to criticism, they are true in essence." This is truly an argument remarkable, not only because of the method of demonstration involved, but because of the total misconception involved as to the connotation of the term *Naturrecht* in German jurisprudence. Mr. Spencer goes on, however, to assign a special and limited character to a *a priori* beliefs in general, but in this we need not follow him, as we shall presently cover this point when we examine Mr. Spencer's system from a different standpoint.

² *Justice*, p. 3.

in which each individual has, in the main, had visited upon it the natural effect of its own nature and consequent conduct. It is to be observed, however, that, in order to secure the efficiency of the evolutionary process, there has been demanded the birth of a vastly greater number of individuals than can by any possibility live lives of natural length. In other words, in order to secure the requisite favorable variations, and to obtain the needed intensity of competition, many are called into life, while but few are chosen for a life sufficiently long to enable them to produce offspring. The development of the species has thus ever been at the expense of the great majority of the individuals constituting it. As to this Mr. Spencer says :

The species has no existence save as an aggregate of individuals, and it is true that, therefore, the welfare of the species is an end to be subserved only as subserving the welfares of individuals. . . . But [he continues] since the disappearance of the species, implying disappearance of all individuals, involves absolute failure of achieving the end, whereas disappearance of individuals, though carried to a great extent, may leave outstanding such number as can, by the continuance of the species, make subsequent fulfillment of the end possible ; the preservation of the individual must, in a variable degree, according to circumstances, be subordinated to the preservation of the species, where the two conflict.²

Coming now to human life, Mr. Spencer, finding in it no elements not embraced in sub-human life, applies as necessary to human development the law stated above that upon each individual should be visited the natural results of his own nature as judged by the degree of his adaptation to the demands of his environment. This law, he declares, is one not simply of fact, but of moral (as he understands moral) obligation. It becomes, in fact, at once a law of necessity (if there would be human evolution) and a canon of distributive justice. Mr. Spencer therefore holds that any interference on the part of man with the principle, which this law declares, is not only unwise, but immoral. He holds, however, that there is an important modification, in form, if not in character, of the principle in its application to men resulting from the gradual recognition by men, due to their increasing intellectuality, that, in order to give this

² *Op. cit.*, p. 6.

beneficent law the fullest freedom of operation, each individual should recognize in others the right to the same unimpeded activity which he claims for himself.

Furthermore, he says, the developing intelligence of men leads to the conscious recognition both of the utilitarian basis upon which it is founded, and to an acceptance of its essentially obligatory character. In other words, although the principle of distributive justice obtains full sway among sub-human species, it is not recognized as doing so in the minds of those over whose destinies it exercises a control. Only among men does the objective operation of the rule result in the formation of a corresponding subjective feeling that it is right that the individual should submit to the conditions of his natural being and to the requirements of his natural environment in order that the ultimate good of his species may be subserved, and that it is proper that he should restrain his desires where their satisfaction will imply an undue interference with the freedom of action of others.

The dread of retaliation, the dread of social dislike, the dread of legal punishment, and the dread of divine vengeance, united in various proportions, form a body of feeling which checks the primitive tendency to pursue the objects of desire without regard to the interests of fellow-men. Containing none of the altruistic sentiment of justice, properly so-called, pro-altruistic sentiment of justice serves temporarily to cause respect for one another's claims, and so to make social coöperation possible.¹

This sentiment, thus produced, in time becomes so firmly grounded in the consciousness of men that it is ultimately mistaken, as Mr. Spencer alleges, for an innate feeling. Such, indeed, he holds to be the essential character of all supposedly innate or *a priori* beliefs.²

From the premises and argument which we have stated it is easily seen how Mr. Spencer is led to the statement of a doctrine of the proper duties of the state, which limits them to the simple police function of protecting life, liberty, and property.

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 30.

² "One who accepts the doctrine of evolution is obliged, if he is consistent, to admit that *a priori* beliefs entertained by men at large must have arisen, if not from the experiences of each individual, then from the experiences of the race." (SPENCER, *op. cit.*, p. 55.)

For, as he conceives it, any political control necessarily checks *pro tanto* the beneficent operation of competition.

It will be seen that in this system which we have outlined the competitive régime among men is defended upon both economic and ethical grounds. As regards the manner in which the personal sense of moral obligation is declared to have arisen, we cannot, of course, give our assent. We do not believe it possible to create, by means of the evolutionary process, a product the elements of which are not conceived to have been present in the material from which it is supposed to have evolved. We do not hold it a logical *sequitur* that because a certain law of development is discovered to govern the growth of sentient beings, therefore it is a law which should or ought to govern. Nor do we hold it possible either by means of individual or race experience to evolve a true altruistic sentiment out of originally selfish feelings. But this is obviously not the place for a criticism of such a view. We shall, however, have occasion later on to show that, even apart from these matters, the system of political ethics advocated by Mr. Spencer exhibits characteristics which can be squared neither with his own nor with any other principles of right and justice.

In order to arrive at his individualistic results Mr. Spencer impliedly maintains the following assertions: first, that a régime of practically unrestricted competition between sub-human individuals is necessary for, and, in fact, does always lead to, the improvement of their species; second, that in this process the interest of the individual may ruthlessly be subordinated to that of the species; third, that what is true of sub-human species is equally true of human beings. These assertions are necessarily implied in the position taken by Mr. Spencer, although in fact he has not proved or attempted to prove the truth of all of them.

As regards the first assertion, all that evolutionary biologists have shown is that, as a matter of fact, a fierce struggle for existence is waged between individuals of the sub-human species, and that the outcome of this has been the gradual development of more complex and better integrated types of life. But this

does not preclude the possibility of an evolution by other and perhaps better means, unless, indeed, it should be held that such a suggestion would impugn the wisdom or the goodness of the Creator, a plea Mr. Spencer could hardly be supposed as willing to advance. As a matter of fact, moreover, as has been shown in the case of domesticated animals, purposive sexual selection, in the absence of competition, is a far more rapid and effective agent of improvement than the elimination of the unfit in a struggle for existence.

Again, as qualifying the effect of Mr. Spencer's first assertion, the connotations of the terms "evolution" and "fittest for survival," as used by the biologist, are to be examined. When this is done it is found that "evolution" is not necessarily synonymous with progress or improvement in any broad or ethical sense; and that the "fitness" implied in the latter phrase has also a peculiar and limited meaning.

In the struggle for existence, in the biologic sense, survival is a demonstration only of adaptation to environment, and, as a necessary consequence, the real character of this fitness is wholly determined by the nature of the environment. As Professor Huxley has said in his now famous Romanes Lecture :

In cosmic nature what is fittest depends upon the conditions. . . . If our hemisphere were to cool again, the survival of the fittest might bring about in the vegetable kingdom a population of more and more stunted and humbler and humbler organisms, until the fittest that survived might be nothing but lichens, diatoms, and such microscopic organisms as those which give red snow its color; while, if it became hotter, the pleasant valleys of the Thames and Isis might be uninhabitable by any animated beings save those that flourish in a tropical jungle. They, as the fittest, the best adapted to changed conditions, would survive.¹

In truth, the very conditions of an unrestricted, unthinking struggle for life between individuals render impossible the survival of exceptionably developed types. Where, as a result of an exceptional variation, an individual differs radically from its kind, this very difference, albeit one indicating development, is a disadvantage to it, as rendering it, as it were, out of *rapport* with its environment. Thus the effect of competition everywhere

¹ *Evolution and Ethics*, "Collected Essays," Vol. IX.

observable in the sub-human world is the prevention of maximum development, and the maintenance in its stead of a comparatively low level of life. The process is thus much like the slow advance of a line of men in battle. Those who rush ahead are the first killed by the enemy.

As regards the truth of that second assertion which we have stated to be implicit in Mr. Spencer's theory; namely, that the interests and even the existence of the individual may rightfully be subordinated to the welfare of the species, a positive denial must be entered, so far at least as regards its application to man. In the manner in which this demand is made by Mr. Spencer, such a sacrifice can be justified according to neither transcendental nor utilitarian systems of ethics. For, if, as the transcendentalist holds, man is a partaker in the Divine Reason, and his moral consciousness is therefore a partial manifestation, as it were, of the World Spirit, he has moral rights and duties as such, and is thus distinguished from a thing. And, this being so, it is ethically improper to treat the individual simply as a means to an end, even though that end be the welfare of his race. This, of course, does not mean that the social welfare should under no circumstances be preferred to the individual's good, but only that when one individual, or society at large, assumes to control the actions or destinies of other individuals, the motive should be one in which there is involved the recognition that those other individuals are persons, not things; that they, each of them, are ends unto themselves, and that therefore the action to be taken can only be justified if the object sought to be realized is one which those individuals would themselves recognize to be a desirable one, if they were to reason regarding it intelligently and impartially. It is true that in many cases where social coercion may justly be applied the coerced one may not admit its rightfulness or submit willingly to its operation. In such a conflict superior might finally determines the issue. But if the compelled one be honest and intelligent according to his opportunities, he cannot be said to be immoral in his resistance; nor, on the other hand, if the action of the superior force has been controlled by the principle just

stated, can its conduct be condemned. In a society of individuals ethically and intellectually perfect no such conflicts would occur. The controlling power would demand no sacrifices which could not be ethically justified, and no individual would resist the enforcement of a control which he could see to be wise and proper.

It scarcely need be said that such a subordination of the individual to society as this has no essential points of resemblance to that subjection of the individual to the welfare of its species which is implied in the biologic laws of "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest." The sacrifice demanded by these laws is ruthless, largely indiscriminative, and wholly selfish. So far as the process can be termed teleological, its sole aim is the improvement of the species, and the means employed one which contains no asking or possible granting of consent on the part of the individual victims. According to its principles the absolute annulment of every right of an indefinite number of individuals is justified if only the ultimate preservation of the species be promoted. According to the transcendentalist principle not the smallest demand may rightfully be made of a single person if this be the manner of, and the sole motive for, making it.

Nor can the subordination of the welfare of the individual to that of the species which is seen in the evolutionary process be defended upon a basis of utilitarian ethics. If, as Mr. Spencer and his school hold, utility is the determining criterion of rightfulness, then a sense of moral obligation cannot be conceived to exist except when the individual to be obligated himself recognizes the utility of the act demanded. If then, in any instance, the individual should assert, as indeed almost all individuals, if questioned, would assert, that he considers the welfare of future generations of less value to him than his own welfare or life, we cannot demand that such a one should feel morally obligated to obey the given behest. In case of refusal it might, upon utilitarian grounds, be justifiable for society at large to coerce him, but it could not judge him morally recalcitrant, nor could the victim feel otherwise than oppressed.

Inasmuch, therefore, as in the unrestricted struggle for existence it is the nine-tenths that are submerged in order that the one-tenth shall survive, the evolutionary system must, upon utilitarian grounds, be oppressive and irrational to the great majority of the individuals affected by it.

This is precisely the point seized upon by Benjamin Kidd in his book *Social Evolution*. Building in the main upon Spencerian premises, Kidd declares that when that process of development which is helplessly and unthinkingly submitted to by the brute creation is examined in the light of men's reason, it is seen to be, as to the majority of them, an essentially irrational one. The reason why men have not long ago sought to end this destructive competition has been due, he declares, to the fact that religion has supplied super-rational or irrational sanctions to sustain social subordination. There are inherent defects in Mr. Kidd's argument both as to the rational, or rather the irrational, character of all religious beliefs, and as to that absolute hostility of the interests of the individual to those of society which he states in the broadest manner possible. Of these we will speak later. But certainly Mr. Kidd's theory that, from the standpoint of the individual, the simple biologic process of evolution cannot be defended upon utilitarian grounds, is correct.

As regards the third implied assumption of Mr. Spencer, that an unrestricted struggle for existence is as beneficent among human races as among sub-human species, the objections that may be urged are so numerous as to render difficult their treatment within the compass of a single chapter. The gist of them all are, however, contained in the two following statements of fact. First, that it is the general desire, as well as the true duty, of man not simply to live, but to live well. Second, that man as a rational being has the ability to modify his relation to his environment, either by consciously adapting his manner of life to it, or by altering its conditions.

The first truth has been well stated by President Schurman in a review of Mr. Spencer's *Justice* in the *Philosophical Review*:

The receipt [says President Schurman] of the natural consequences of an individual's nature, active or quiescent, wherein Mr. Spencer discovers the

essence of justice, seems to me to be neither just nor unjust, neither right nor wrong, neither moral nor immoral. No doubt this process has made the later generations of animals stronger, more cunning, and better adapted to the environment than the earlier generations. And were we aiming at a similar improvement in the breed of man, we might perhaps not be able to do better than let the process of natural selection go on undisturbed. In that case we should have no charities for the poor, no hospitals for the sick, no protection for the weak and helpless. If the goal be the superiority of future generations, let the least forward varieties be eliminated. But there is no reason or excuse for such consequences when it is recognized that the conception of human welfare as ethical end implies, first of all, the well-being of existing humanity, each member of which is to be treated as an end in himself, never as a mere means to other ends, and then, secondarily, the welfare of future humanity—but only in so far as is compatible with the just claims of every living child of man. Mr. Spencer's moralization of natural selection is not demanded by an ethical system which places the supreme end in the welfare of the species, nor is it in itself inherently defensible. To the contention that the biological law "possesses the highest possible authority," because it records the process followed in the maintenance and evolution of life, it must be replied that even if this circumstance invested it with "authority"—as it does not—natural selection, when it reaches the plane of rational life, is subordinated to the higher principle of human sympathy and sociality, which is the taproot alike of morality and of the organized community in which it is realized. Ethics, accordingly, carries us into a sphere—not merely of living, but of living well—in which the biological formula is without application.¹

In other words, with the advent of rational, self-conscious, moral man, the aims of life are so changed as to render inappropriate that process of development which is efficient in the lower animal world. With self-consciousness comes the appreciation on the part of the individual of the possibility of a personal perfection, the formation in idea of a happier and better life than a mere animal existence. Whether the formation of such an ideal be the result of a divine afflatus or the effect of race experience, its existence is undeniable.

In the light, then, of this new conception, the term "fit for survival" assumes a new significance. Fitness now means ethical fitness. As has been said by another of Mr. Spencer's critics, social progress thus becomes a progress "the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but

¹ Vol. I, No. 1.

of those who are ethically the best.”¹ When, now, to this ethical element, contributed by self-consciousness, we add the cognitive factor of reason which suggests the possibility, as well as the means by which man may take active steps to realize his new desires, we render almost self-evident the principle that should govern both individual and social action. This is, in short, that the slower and more expensive method of structural development by means of the biologic law should be supplanted by a process devised by the intellect of man, in which the operation of the former law is checked where it is seen to lead to evil or to entail an unnecessary amount of waste and suffering.

Professor Huxley in the address from which we have already quoted has elaborated this principle with great clearness :

Men in society [he says] are undoubtedly subject to the cosmic process. As among other animals, multiplication goes on without cessation, and involves severe competition for the means of support. The struggle for existence tends to eliminate those less fitted to adapt themselves to the circumstances of their existence; the strongest, the most self-assertive, tend to break down the weaker. But the influence of the cosmic process on the evolution of society is the greater the more rudimentary its civilization. Social progress means a checking of the cosmic process at every step and the substitution for it of another, which may be called the ethical process; the end of which is not the survival of those who may happen to be the fittest, in respect of the whole of the conditions which obtain, but of those who are ethically the best. And he continues :

The practice of that which is ethically best — what we call goodness or virtue — involves a course of conduct which, *in all respects*, is opposed to that which leads to success in the cosmic struggle for existence. In place of ruthless self-assertion, it demands self-restraint; in place of thrusting aside, or treading down, all competitors, it requires that the individual shall not merely respect, but shall help his fellows; its influence is directed, not so much to the survival of the fittest, as to the fitting of as many as possible to survive. . . . Laws and moral precepts are directed to the end of curbing the cosmic process and reminding the individual of his duty to the community, to the protection and influence of which he owes, if not existence itself, at least the life of something better than a brutal savage.

While the main conclusions reached by Huxley in his Romanes address have received very general acceptance, two more or less technical criticisms have been made to his mode of

¹ HUXLEY, *Evolution and Ethics*.

stating them. It has been questioned, in the first place, whether he has not distinguished too sharply between the ethical and cosmic processes. In the quotations which we have made it is seen that apparently he makes the two processes mutually exclusive and antagonistic. But it may be asked: However much the ethical process may differ from the competitive process which prevails among the beings of lower creation, does not the former, as much as the latter, constitute a part of the general cosmic process; and does not, in truth, an adequate connotation of the term "cosmic process" comprehend all stages and methods of phenomenal development—a development which, however, may assume one form in the sub-human sphere, and another in the human world?

Undoubtedly an affirmative answer must be given to this question, as no doubt Huxley himself would agree. In fact, though some of his expressions would point otherwise, we may in justice doubt whether he was in his address even temporarily led to think otherwise. It has been pointed out that Mr. Huxley may have been consciously using, for the time being, the language of the unscientific, and the quotation from Seneca with which he prefaces his paper, *Soleo enim et in aliena castra transire, non tanquam transfuga sed tanquam explorator*, may indicate this.¹ Moreover, we have, in the *Prolegomena* which Mr. Huxley has prefixed to his address, the virtual admission of the point. In comparing the progress of plants under artificial and under natural selection, he says:

Thus it is not only true that the cosmic energy, working through man upon a portion of the plant world, opposes the same energy as it works throughout the state of nature, but a similar antagonism is everywhere manifest between the artificial and the natural.

And in a note he adds:

Or, to put the case still more simply: When a man lays hold of the two ends of a piece of string and pulls them, with intent to break it, the right arm is certainly exerted in antagonism to the left arm; yet both arms derive their energy from the same original source.

This is satisfactory so far as it goes, as admitting or showing that the processes of life and development which go on in the

¹ By Miss WHITE, *International Journal of Ethics*, Vol. V, p. 478.

human and sub-human spheres constitute parts of one general cosmic scheme ; but the implication is still left that the so-called ethical process is both essentially different from, and antagonistic to, that process which is displayed in the lower realms of life. And this leads to the second general question regarding Mr. Huxley's position. This is, whether the ethical process does in fact have, either for its aim or its result, a cessation of the competitive principle ; and whether, therefore, the ethical principle does in fact differ in kind from the evolutionary principles of "struggle for existence" and "survival of the fittest." In other words, cannot we take Mr. Huxley's homely example, and say that, though, to be sure, the two arms in stretching the string do, in a certain sense, pull in opposite directions, yet their *modus operandi* is essentially the same, and, what is more important, they both have the same aim in view, namely, the stretching or breaking of the twine?

Now, as all agree, the aim of all striving, whether animal or human, is life and development. The difference between the evolutionary process among men and among animals cannot, therefore, consist in the general end sought to be attained. What difference there is can only consist in the different sort of life or development striven for. This, indeed, is a very great difference, but is not one which would distinguish generically the two processes.

Professor John Dewey has called attention to the fact that there is no distinction *in kind* between those brute instincts which Mr. Huxley calls natural and those higher instincts which he calls moral.¹ The animal impulses and all natural impulses are not *per se* moral or immoral ; they are the basis for all moral action, and whether moral or immoral depends upon how and for what purpose they are exercised. Thus both natural and social selection operate alike in so far as each implies adaptation to environment. The essential difference between the two processes consists, as has been before suggested, in the fact that what is unconscious with the brute is conscious with man, and that with this consciousness comes moral responsibility for the

¹ *Monist*, Vol. VIII, p. 32.

manner in which capacities are exercised, and the ends toward the attainment of which efforts are directed.

But, it may still be asked, do not the forms of development sought by men differ so radically from those striven for by members of the lower living world as to necessitate methods that are essentially distinct? At first sight it would seem so, for, as we have already seen, one of the prime characteristics of the ethical régime is at once to put an end to many forms of competition which reign supreme in the realm of lower life. Yet, when we look at the matter closely, we find that in reality *that for which ethical man seeks is not necessarily to check the competitive process, but rather to fix, as criteria of fitness for survival, characteristics different from those established by purely biological laws.* The aim is thus not so much to check the stream of competitive energy as to direct it into different channels. The "struggle for existence" still remains, and through it development is secured, but the weapons used are changed, and the tests of superiority altered to meet the requirements of the new forms of development desired. This is a point which has been made very plain in the article by Professor Dewey from which we have already quoted. Competition still persists, but it is no longer one simply for life, or based upon the mere physical, or lower intellectual, attributes. In the human world the struggle becomes one, the conditions of which are moralized by the presence of sympathy, ideas of justice, and in general those ideals of personal perfection which man's developed mentality discloses to him. The bare struggle for existence, to be sure, still goes on to a very considerable extent among the lower wage-earning classes, and this, unfortunately, often approximates in severity, cruelty, and wastefulness the competition of the sub-human régime. But above these classes, as the higher stages of social life are reached, the competition is modified by the conditions of which we have spoken. And even as to the lower classes, the effort of much modern legislation is, while not destroying competition, to raise its moral plane by the enactment of laws regulating the conditions under which, and the persons by whom, certain forms of more arduous and

dangerous work shall be performed. This legislative effort is also supplemented by the endeavors of school and church—the one seeking so to develop the minds, the other so to stimulate and direct the motives and emotions of the members of the lower classes, that they may secure through their own efforts an amelioration and moralization of their life-conditions.

Even in those cases, however, in which the moralization of human efforts seems to necessitate a checking of the struggle for simple survival, a deeper insight discloses that in many instances this is not the case. Struggle for existence means nothing more than a striving for adaptation to environment. It is thus possible to show that, even upon a purely utilitarian basis, many of our most common altruistic acts are socially self-serving; that, though they call for temporary sacrifices, they serve ultimately to excite emotions and to create habits which are socially beneficial. Thus, for example, Professor Dewey points out that in caring for the sick and helpless

we develop habits of foresight and forethought, powers of looking before and after, tendencies to husband our means, which ultimately make us the most skillful in warfare. We foster habits of group-loyalty, feelings of solidarity, which bind us together by such close ties that no social group which has not cultivated like feelings, through caring for all its members, will be able to understand us. In a word, such conduct would pay in the struggle for existence as well as be morally commendable.¹

Finally, upon this point, it is to be observed, as exhibiting from still another standpoint the essential similarity between social and animal methods of development, that these so-called altruistic elements which characterize human civilization are by no means absent from the sub-human world. Not to speak of that dependence of offspring upon parent which exists among almost, if not, all orders of life, there is, at least among the members of the higher animal species, an interdependence that often implies self-sacrifice, and leads to substantial coöperation. It may be that such actions are not due to conscious ethical motives, but they result at any rate in *de facto* altruism and coöperation. As Mr. Leslie Stephen has said:

¹ *Loc. cit.*

It may be anthropomorphic to attribute any maternal emotions of the human kind to the animal. The bird, perhaps, sits upon her eggs because they give her an agreeable sensation, or, if you please, from a blind instinct which somehow determines her to the practice. She does not look forward, we may suppose, to bringing up a family, or speculate upon the delights of domestic affection. I only say that as a fact she behaves in a way which is at once injurious to her own chances of individual survival and absolutely necessary to the survival of the species. The abnormal bird who deserts her nest escapes many dangers, but if all birds were devoid of the instinct, the birds would not survive a generation.¹

This inclusion of the ethical within the cosmic process removes the last possible ground of support for that fear which Mr. Spencer expresses in his *Man versus the State*, that man in attempting to interfere with laws of the latter is setting himself against august nature as *natura naturans*—that he is, in effect, pitting the microcosm against the macrocosm. The danger of this proceeding, he declares, is apparent in its very terms.

If the political meddler could be induced to contemplate the essential meaning of his plan, he would be paralyzed by the sense of his own temerity. He proposes to suspend in some way or degree that process by which all life has been evolved.

This fear of Mr. Spencer lest the cosmic forces be interfered with by man is one constantly reiterated by him. Yet does Mr. Spencer pretend to say that it is possible for man to defeat the operation of a natural or cosmic law? Or, if he does, where does he draw the line between purely natural or cosmic action and artificial action? If he would apply his censure to any effort on the part of man to escape from the operation of the competitive law, should he not, we may ask, extend his condemnation to any and all efforts of individuals of the brute creation to avoid danger and to bring themselves into better adjustment of their *milieu*? Does not, in fact, all life, human as well as animal, imply a struggle for adaptation to environment? Also, it may pertinently be asked, why, if man is, as Mr. Spencer holds, able so potently to affect for evil the operation of natural forces, may he not, conceivably at least, be able to use his power for the accomplishment of good? Or are natural laws of such a

¹ *Social Rights and Duties*, I, p. 235.

peculiar character that, though modifiable, they are modifiable only for the worse?

As a matter of fact, when traced to its source, it is found that Mr. Spencer everywhere betrays in his writings what may be called a personal hostility toward governments. Though at times he speaks of government as subject in its life and development to cosmic evolutionary laws, he nevertheless, when treating its other than pure police functions, uniformly considers it as something unnatural, artificial, existing apart from nature, as having interests necessarily different from, if not absolutely antagonistic to, those of its subjects, and as using them but as means for the realization of its own and necessarily evil ends. The attitude of mind of Mr. Spencer is of course explainable by the fact that in his study of past conditions he has for the most part discovered governments controlled by oligarchies and administered selfishly in the interests of those in power. We reply, however, that such conditions, though they may serve to show why in the past evil results have so often followed governmental action, have no power whatever to show that such will inevitably be the outcome in the future. Not only this, but we may without conceit declare ourselves freed from much of the ignorance under which our ancestors labored. Also we may point to the fact that no longer is political power in the hands of the minority, nor exercised in its behalf, but that in theory wholly, and in practice in large part, government by the people and for the people as a whole is a realized fact.

The criticism just made of Mr. Spencer's theories will serve as a basis upon which to make an estimate of the value of much of the reasoning of Mr. Kidd as contained in his *Social Evolution*. Like Spencer, Kidd accepts unreservedly the application of the purely biological laws of evolution to social man, and, as a necessary consequence, condemns as ill-advised all efforts directed to the checking of their operation.* Upon this ground he

* Mr. Kidd's views in this respect are rendered still more radical by the fact that he accepts the views of Weismann and his school that "acquired characteristics" are not inherited. The effect of this is, of course, to throw the entire burden of progress upon natural selection as secured by the competitive process. He is thus necessarily

conceives socialistic schemes fundamentally defective, and recommends in their stead all forms of social or political action which will in any way remove present hindrances upon competition. He is optimistic enough to believe that the present trend, of western civilization at least, is in this direction. In his closing pages he says :

The central fact working itself out in our midst is one which is ever tending to bring about, for the first time in the history of the race, all the people into competition of life on a footing of equality of opportunity. In this process the problem with which society and legislators will be concerned for long into the future will be how to secure to the fullest degree those conditions of equality, while at the same time retaining that degree of inequality which must result from offering prizes sufficiently attractive to keep up within the community that stress and exertion without which no people can long continue in a high state of efficiency.

There is much truth and value in what Kidd has shown us ; and to the doctrine contained in the quotation which we have just made there can scarcely be given anything but praise. For, as we have seen, the result of our own inquiries has been to show, not only the necessity for, but the actual persistence of, competition among men even in the highest social states. The pity is, then, that in the body of his work Kidd, like his teacher Spencer, should nowhere have properly characterized or apparently comprehended what should be the true character of this competition, but should have interpreted it as practically equivalent to that mere struggle for life and subsistence which characterizes the sub-human sphere. It is furthermore unfortunate that he should have largely covered over what value otherwise

led to declare that progress will be the most swift where the number of men born into the world is greatest in excess of the means of possible subsistence, for under such circumstances the competition will be the keenest, the weeding out of the inefficient most rapid, and the selection of the fit most exact. It is a perfectly obvious fact, however, that history shows this not to have been the result among men. This incongruity of fact and theory should alone have been sufficient to warn Kidd that his premises needed revising. In this connection, also, we might call attention to the fact, excellently brought out by MALLOCK in his *Aristocracy and Evolution*, that very much of the competition that has existed among men has been between employers rather than the employed, and has thus been a struggle not so much for subsistence as for dominion and other satisfactions. Upon this point see also a review of Kidd's work by THEODORE ROOSEVELT in the *North American Review* for July, 1895.

belonged to his work by a conception of religion and of its social value almost wholly erroneous, and to have emphasized this error by an attempted historical analysis of the progress of western civilization which, aside from the errors arising from the false premises regarding the character and influence of religious beliefs, displays a frequent ignorance or omission of important facts.

The work is injured also by the assertion, obviously untrue in fact and unnecessary indeed to his own thesis, of an unavoidable and complete opposition between the interests of the individual and of the society of which he is a member. Thus in one place he says: "The interests of the social organism and those of the individuals composing it at any time are actually antagonistic; they can never be reconciled, they are inherently and essentially irreconcilable." In justice to Kidd it should be said that he elsewhere qualifies the above statement to the extent of implying that some individuals may have an interest in the social welfare. This, while convicting him of inconsistency, relieves him at any rate of absurdity.

Let us stop for a moment, however, to see what is meant by the declaration that the interests of even a majority of the individuals of the present day are necessarily antagonistic to those of the society which they constitute. This, even in its qualified form, is a most serious and startling assertion. The general argument of Kidd shows that he means by this declaration that all individuals are by nature selfish; that, rationally, they conceive, or should conceive, their highest welfare to consist in material self-satisfaction; and that consequently the welfare of future generations cannot possibly enter as a reasonable factor into the determination of their conduct or ideals. To the statement of this ethical principle is joined the assertion that race or social progress is possible only through a competitive process which involves misery and destruction to a great majority of the participating individuals. From these two assertions the principle is deduced that, were the men of the present day to act from purely rational motives, they would put a stop to this competitive struggle by the institution of some sort of socialistic scheme which would benefit themselves, but which would at once put an

end to social progress, and would, in fact, inaugurate a process of degeneration. This would, of course, mean that future generations would suffer from such a policy, but those now living would realize a higher degree, or at least a greater amount, of comfort and pleasure than would otherwise fall to their lot.

The bald utilitarianism and the consequent irrationality of all pure forms of altruism which Kidd maintains we cannot stop to criticise. To some extent what has already been said in the argument which has gone before will serve the purpose. But admitting for the nonce that self-interest in its strictest sense should rule, is it true that individual and race interests are antagonistic and irreconcilable?

If Kidd had merely said that, as at present organized and operated, our social system is one in which race progress is secured at the expense of individual welfare, that would have been a simple statement of fact, to answer which it would merely be necessary to examine thoroughly existing social conditions, and from such an examination to determine, if possible, whether or not this were so. But this is not what is declared. In *Social Evolution* the assertion is made, and declared to have been demonstrated, that the two interests, race and individual, are inherently irreconcilable; that, in other words, it is impossible, under any conceivable social régime, to secure at once race progress and general individual success.

The demonstration of the incorrectness of this assertion depends directly upon the same reasoning which we have applied to the theories of Spencer. The source of the error of Kidd lies in his failure to comprehend the full possibilities of the competitive principle. To him, filled as his mind is with the laws of mere physical life, competition seems to mean little more than a struggle for sustenance and bare existence. We are in hearty accord with Kidd as to the general beneficence among men of a régime in which merit and success are determined by a fair and free contest, and we confess our inability to conceive of any other distributive method that would be of equal social efficiency either for stimulating the development of desirable characteristics or for bringing into the fullest and most effective

operation those abilities which already exist ; but we differ from him in that we hold that men are so endowed intellectually and emotionally as to render it at least conceivably possible for them so to conduct their competitive efforts as to secure at once the progressive improvement of their race and a life of relative prosperity and happiness for themselves. In other words, contrary to Kidd, we believe that, whatever may be our present state, we are not shut off from conceiving a possible one, in which, while admitting to the fullest the competitive principle, social methods will be so perfected that through a wider diffusion of knowledge, a better adjustment of relations between employer and employed, a more enlightened sense of moral responsibility, and a more nearly perfect organization of industry generally, not only will the means be given to each individual to make known the capabilities, manual or intellectual, which he possesses, but the opportunity afforded for exercising those talents in a manner both remunerative to himself and useful to society at large. Thus, through the employment of forces at their maximum degrees of efficiency and through the diminution of waste formerly due to enforced idleness and misdirected efforts, it may be hoped that the aggregate economic product will be greatly increased, and at the same time that the conditions which we have mentioned above will secure its distribution according to correct principles of justice. Under such circumstances we believe that future social progress would be possible, and at the same time a régime maintained which would be rational and beneficent to the individuals affected by it.

What we have thus far said has been in answer to the thesis of Kidd that individual and race interest are necessarily, and therefore forever, irreconcilable. As a matter of fact, however, we hold, as do of course the great majority of thinking men, that our social system, even as it is at present constituted and conducted, possesses a present utilitarian rationality to the great majority of individuals. At the same time we admit that there are some to whom this assertion does not hold true. When, for example, we have able-bodied men or women seeking work earnestly and unable to find it, or individuals deprived of such means

of education as are fairly needed to bring to light abilities possessed, or individuals endowed with peculiar talents in particular directions and unable to obtain opportunity for their application or development, it can scarcely be said that, as to such individuals, the existing social system is rationally justified.

In the formation of an estimate as to how many such unfortunate individuals there are in any given society, it may be argued that whether or not a condition be rational to an individual upon a utilitarian basis must necessarily be left to the determination of that individual. His idea of pleasure or success, it may be said, may differ from our own, but as long as the conditions by which he is surrounded meet his own tests we cannot say that he is a victim to the social or political system that is maintained by his race.

If such an argument be raised, it is at once seen, however, that it will serve to justify, in this respect at least, some of the very worst civilizations. In fact, the lower the state of civilization, the easier and more complete would the justification be, for it would be exactly under those conditions that the individuals would be so ignorant and brutal that they would have neither the ability nor disposition to reason intelligently regarding their best interest. It is therefore a sufficient answer to this plea to say that the conditions under which such individuals have lived have never been such as to present a possibility for the formation of truer and higher ideals of happiness and personal welfare.

To this it may be rejoined that this still implies that the one passing the judgment upon a society determines its rationality according to a standard which he himself sets up, and not according to one erected by the individuals themselves. This is true, and must necessarily be so. In the formation of any judgment whatever a critic must have established for himself an ideal or standard, in comparison with which the facts under consideration are judged, and, by their conformity or nonconformity to it, justified or condemned. In this sense every estimate of value, moral, economical, or political, is necessarily subjective. But it is not subjective in so far as the one by whom it is formed or stated eliminates from it all elements of personal bias or

peculiarity. Thus, to take the example we have mentioned, if the critic has no regard for what he, individually, with his own personal peculiarities, most desires, but considers solely what form of welfare, looked at from the highest ethical standpoint, would be most suitable to the individuals concerned, and which would indeed be most acceptable to them were they properly informed, an objective opinion is given.

From the utilitarian standpoint, then, there are two standpoints from which any given society may be declared to be irrationally organized or directed. It may either be alleged that it fails to provide for a possible happiness of a considerable number of its individual members, according to the standard which they set up; or it may be claimed that, though it may provide a possible happiness to all according to their own standards, it yet fails to provide that intellectual and ethical development which is necessary to secure the formation of better ideals. It is easily possible for a given social régime to be held delinquent upon either or both of these counts.

It will be noticed that care has been taken in the foregoing to make use of the phrase "possible happiness." The propriety of this is obvious. A social régime cannot be held responsible for unhappiness due to the willful misconduct of a sufferer; as, for example, where one, either by failing to make use of the opportunities fairly presented to him, or by deliberately selecting the more evil of two courses or refusing to sacrifice a present pleasure for a greater good, has brought harm upon himself. In passing judgment upon the rationality of a régime as to its effects upon individuals, the question is thus not as to what number of individuals are unsuccessful and miserable, but as to what number are so because of the existence of that régime. Where failures are due to personal faults or failings, and not to circumstances over which the individuals have no control, there is reaped only that which has been sown, and social conditions cannot be indicted for the result.

What has been said regarding the necessity of framing a social ideal before it is possible to pass a judgment upon any given régime implies two facts which Kidd, and many others,

seem not to recognize, or at least to state. These are, first, that happiness, prosperity, welfare, success, or whatever similar terms may be used, are not of absolute value, but relative to a standard of conceived perfection; and, secondly, that, in a strict sense, no condition of affairs which is subject to human direction is absolutely rational unless ideally perfect. In this strict sense, therefore, in so far as any régime falls short of perfection, its continued maintenance is irrational.

In the light of the first fact the great majority of the participants in any general contest must necessarily fail. If success be judged by the achievements of the one or few most successful, the entire remainder fail. Indeed, in many cases it may even be held that all have failed, inasmuch as the most successful may have fallen far short of that which was not only desirable, but possible of attainment. But—and here is the point—this by no means proves that as to the whole, or even as to the less successful portion of the people, the contest has been a failure. There is still a possibility that all, or nearly all, have received benefit from the struggle, though, to be sure, some have been relatively more rewarded than their fellows. For those who believe as fully as does Kidd in the efficiency of the competitive régime in stimulating the energies and properly directing the efforts of individuals, the presumption is, in fact, that such will be the case under any individualistic scheme of social organization.

Applying now the second fact of which we have spoken above, we may ask what is the proper meaning of the question, "Is a given social régime rationally justified?" Strictly speaking no completely rational social régime has ever existed, nor will such a one exist until that form of organization and manner of administration is effected under which not only race progress at the most rapid possible rate is secured, but complete opportunity afforded to every individual member to render effective every capability which he possesses, and to develop every power potentially possessed, and, finally, under which is guaranteed to all the just results accruing from their several activities. When, then, it is said by Kidd that present social conditions are without a rational basis, he is right in the sense that they are not all

that they should be. But this, as we have seen, is not the comparison which Kidd makes. His assertion is that past and present social régimes, so far as they are competitive, are irrational when viewed from the individualistic standpoint; and, so far as non-competitive, irrational when viewed from the social standpoint. He thus excludes the possibility of a régime rational from both standpoints. He is, therefore, unable to conceive of an absolutely ideal state, though, as between the two, he prefers that absolutely competitive state in which the progress of the race is best secured.

For the sake of clearness, we will restate our position. We agree with Kidd in believing that the absolutely competitive state is the ideal one; but we disagree with him as to the impossibility of securing general individual welfare thereunder. When we speak of the ideal goal of human progress necessitating the establishment of an absolutely competitive régime, we qualify this by adding the condition that competition is to be maintained only upon the very highest planes. The régime must be one in which, as has been already implied, the *criteria* of fitness for success or survival will be the possession of absolutely the highest moral qualities. This, naturally, implies the disappearance of all the lower and more brutalizing forms of strife, and with them the avoidance of all the unnecessary forms of suffering to which they give rise. It means that no one shall find himself born into a social world in which he is to any degree so bound by social requirements or so hindered by the intricacy of the economic machinery, in the management of which he constitutes but an insignificant agent, that he is unable to develop to the fullest his capacities, to educate to the fullest his desires, and to reap to the fullest the rewards of his individual merit. Thus interpreted, it needs no imaginative development to show that in a society so organized there would need be no sacrifice of the welfare of individuals, either present or to come. Thus, as a result of this long course of reasoning, we are finally brought to sustain the thesis of Mr. Spencer, which we originally criticised, namely, "that the interests of humanity are to be best subserved by giving full effect to the law that

each individual shall receive the benefits and evils of his own nature and its consequent conduct." It is only in the interpretation of this rule that we have differed widely from that philosopher.

It is especially in the bearing of the rule upon the question of the legitimate extent of social control that we are at variance with him. To us its recognition as a principle would carry with it no necessary demand for a diminution in the functions of government. Its recognition would, to be sure, imply a change in character and motive of many of the state's present activities, but would not necessarily decrease their aggregate amount. It would involve the disappearance of many forms of industrial interference that now exist, and the abandonment of all of the cruder forms of state socialism. But it would permit a vast extension of the present regulative and educational functions of the governing powers. The state's regulative powers could be made to embrace all those functions which are necessary; first, to prevent the limitation of the freedom of individuals, such as is sometimes attempted by such organized bodies as churches, labor unions, political societies, and industrial combinations; and, secondly, to secure competition along the highest lines, by providing that certain forms of work shall be carried on under prescribed conditions, as regards, for instance, hours of work, employment of women and children, and maintenance of hygienic conditions.

The educational functions of the state could in like manner be subjected to almost indefinite extension. They could be made to include, not only the collection and dissemination of every variety of information, statistical or otherwise, which could be of possible value to the people, but could also properly be made to embrace the more directly pedagogic task of providing for the freest and most adequate instruction in all forms of human knowledge, practical and speculative.

Such activities as the above would not necessarily be anti-competitive or socialistic in character. In my book *The Nature of the State*, after dividing the functions of the state into essential and non-essential duties (meaning by non-essential all those

activities assumed by the state, not because their exercise is a *sine qua non* of the state's existence, but because their public administration is supposed to be advantageous to the people), I called attention to the fact that this latter class is separable into two divisions which may properly be termed socialistic and non-socialistic. The socialistic duties properly comprehend only activities which can and will be exercised by the people if left to their private initiative. Their assumption is, therefore, to that extent, a curtailment of industrial freedom of the people. The non-socialistic duties include those which, if not assumed by the state, either cannot or will not be exercised at all. As I said in the work to which I have referred—

They are duties not essential to the state's existence, and yet, from their very nature, not likely or even possible of performance by private parties. Such duties as these are, therefore, not socialistic, because their public assumption does not limit the field of private enterprise, nor in any way interfere with private management of any sort of industry. As a rule they are powers educational in character rather than coercive, directive rather than controlling. Under this head come all those administrative duties that are of an investigating, statistical character, and consist, not in the interference with industry, but in the study of conditions and the diffusion of the information thus obtained. Work of this kind is that performed by the United States Departments of Labor and Agriculture, by the Bureau of Education, the Fish Commission, the Coast and Geodetic Survey, by the Census Bureau, etc. Public libraries and reading-rooms, boards of health, the provision of public parks, and certain branches of education also come under this head. Their purpose is not to interfere with the struggle for existence and the survival of the fittest, but to transform the environment and, by diffusing sounder information concerning the character of the conditions and the nature of the forces by which man is surrounded, to render it possible for him either to harmonize his efforts with them or to direct his strength and intelligence to a modification of them. In fine, to increase his opportunities.¹

But even the ownership and direct operation of industrial concerns by the state are not necessarily excluded by the adoption of the competitive principle. As long as it appears that a given industry, if left in private hands, will almost inevitably be subjected to the control of some one or few commercial "trusts," whereby true or healthy competition is rendered impossible, the assumption by the state of its management will at least

¹ *The Nature of the State*, pp. 347, 348.

not lessen competition ; while, on the other hand, it will secure to the people generally the benefits flowing from the monopoly. This control cannot, however, consistently with the competitive principle, be applied so long as there is a possibility of devising effective means for so controlling the organization and operation of monopolies that a healthy competition may be obtained.

In the second place, aside from the qualifications of the above, state operation of an industry may be justified upon the competitive principle if by so doing the industry is managed in such a way that a greater degree of true competition will be maintained between the individuals employed than would be the case under private management. This we consider a very important point, though not one which we remember to have seen often urged. From the social standpoint it is much more desirable that there should be healthy competition between employés than that there should be a contest between industrial concerns. It is one of the chief evils of the present industrial régime of production on a large scale that the chief competition that exists is between workingmen and -women in securing employment. Positions once secured, competition largely ceases. The employés become merged into a large body of workers, and have little direct personal interest in the work which they perform. Even in those private industries in which the wages paid are proportionate to the amount of work done, the individual is not permitted, as a rule, to exhibit his full degree of skill. In many cases it is an unwritten law among such workmen that certain maxima of piece work shall not be exceeded, even by the most able and skillful, for the very satisfactory reason that if such maxima are more than occasionally exceeded the price paid per piece by the employers will inevitably be reduced, with the result, of course, that the most efficient will henceforth receive no more than they would have earned under the old scale, while all the remainder will receive less.

If, then, we can have a governmental control, in which earnings are graded according to the amount and character of work done, and in which a careful inspection is maintained for the purpose of detecting with reasonable certainty the presence of

merit or demerit in all their degrees, and of rewarding them proportionately, either by increase or decrease of wages, or by changing the character of work required, then a truer and more beneficial competition will be maintained than the old competition between concerns which the governmental monopoly will destroy. We are not, however, to be considered as maintaining that any such beneficent governmental management will be likely to result from public control, political morality and intelligence being what they now are. We should, in fact, expect the reverse. All that we wish to point out is that the application of the competitive principle would not necessarily, that is, under all conceivable conditions, exclude such governmental ownership and operation.

By way of summarization of the points of difference between the conclusions to which we have been led by the adoption of the competitive principle as an ideal one, and those reached by Mr. Spencer in applying the same principle, we may say : First, that, instead of leaving individuals to conduct their contests in their own way, unrestrained by social control, we would justify all actions of the state which will tend to raise the ethical plane of competition. Secondly, we would justify state intervention where such intervention is for the purpose of preventing oppression of individuals by each other. Thirdly, we would justify such intervention where, without it, monopolies or trusts would be organized under private management. Fourthly, we would justify state action where its influence is educative, or where it is limited to the performance of some duty which otherwise would not be performed at all. Fifthly, we would justify state action where, although its effect is to put an end to certain forms of competition, its result is the stimulation and maintenance of better forms of rivalry.

It is now necessary to answer one final question. It may be asked whether these kinds of governmental intervention which we have justified do not rest for their justification upon the implication of a certain amount of ignorance or viciousness on the part of the people, and whether, therefore, it is not true that as civilization advances the necessity for this intervention

will decrease, until finally, when the final goal of human progress is reached, the need for political control will have entirely disappeared. If we answer yes to this, we in effect affirm that, though the anarchistic state be not now desirable, it yet stands as an ideal continually to be striven for and possibly ultimately to be realized.

This proposition has been and still is widely held. Spencer in his *Social Statics* says :

It is a mistake to assume that government must necessarily last forever. The institution marks a certain stage of civilization—is natural to a peculiar phase of human development. It is not essential, but incidental. As amongst Bushmen we find a state antecedent to government, so there may be one in which it shall become extinct.¹

And again he says :

Does it [government] not exist because crime exists? . . . Is there not more liberty, that is, less government, as crime diminishes? And must not government cease when crime ceases, for the very lack of objects on which to perform its function? Not only does magisterial power exist because of evil, but it exists by evil.²

Janet takes the same view in his *Histoire de la Science politique* :

Imaginez [he says] en effet une politique parfaite, un gouvernement parfait, des lois parfaites, vous supposez par là même des hommes parfaits. Mais alors la politique ne serait plus autre chose que le gouvernement libre de chaque homme par soi-même : en d'autres termes, elle cesserait d'être. Et cependant, c'est là sa fin et son idéal. L'objet du gouvernement est de préparer insensiblement les hommes à cet état parfait de société, ou les lois et le gouvernement lui-même deviendraient inutiles.

Hume, too, in his essay *Of the Original Contract*, says :

Were all men possessed of so inflexible a regard to justice that of themselves they would totally abstain from the properties of others, they had forever remained in a state of absolute liberty, without subjection to any magistrate or political society.

The assertion of Jules Simon, that "the state ought to render itself useless and prepare for its own decease," indicates the same view. So also we find the late Professor Freeman asserting: "As for discussions about any one ideal form of government, they are simply idle. The ideal form of government

¹ Edition 1873, p. 24.

² *Ibid.*, p. 230.

is no government at all. The existence of government in any shape is a sign of man's imperfection." And, finally, to similar effect is the declaration of Paine in his *Common Sense*, that "government, like dress, is the badge of lost innocence."¹

What degree of truth is there in this conception of anarchism or no-government as an ideal? In one sense there is a good deal; in another, none. If by anarchism reference is had to the absence of all coercion, the conception is a valid one. If, however, the idea is that all forms of public activities shall disappear, it is invalid. As we have elsewhere pointed out, all coercion is in itself painful, and therefore an evil. An ideal social order must, therefore, be one in which the element of coercion is to play no part. On the other hand, as we have also pointed out, in so far as political laws or social conventions are recognized as just by those whose actions are to be controlled, no feeling of coercion is to be experienced. The absence of coercion which is ideally demanded does not, therefore, necessarily imply the disappearance of all forms of public activities and regulations. In fact, were all men morally perfect, and intellectually enlightened, public activities would in all probability be very widely extended. For with men so perfect morally and intellectually, there would be no difficulty either in establishing or operating an administrative machine with any number of functions. Controlled by such wise and upright men the economies in production that would follow from the establishment of such a control would be obvious, and at the same time the necessary competitive struggle between individual workers could be maintained—if, indeed, any competition would be needed to stimulate the energies and to weed out the unfit in a race already, *ex hypothesi*, so nearly perfect.

It is true, however, that should such a state of development ever be attained, many of what are now among the most important of the functions of the state would fall into disuse. The exercise of all the punitive and, to a large extent, the educational activities of the political authorities would become unnecessary. Legislation would be needed not so much for the purpose of

¹ *Historical Essays*, Fourth Series.

applying coercion as for the sake of providing such uniform rules as convenience would dictate. Civil as well as criminal litigation would conceivably cease. Only the administrative duties of the state would remain. These would probably be increased so as to include the performance by the state of every possible service that could, from the nature of the case, be better performed by a single agent than by the several efforts, however harmonious, of private individuals.

By way of conclusion of this long inquiry, then, it may be stated that we have reached a position which sustains that portion of the theory of the socialist which justifies the extension of state activities in any conceivable direction where it can be shown that, as a matter of fact, political control will be followed by beneficent results. At the same time, this does not commit us to the advocacy of social control in any given case. An estimate of all the considerations involved may, indeed, easily lead us to advise the reduction of state duties to a minimum below that now practiced in any of our civilized states. In truth, so far as the reasoning that has gone before is concerned, the tendency has been to emphasize the possibilities, both for race and individual progress, that are wrapt up in the competitive principle.

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